Graded by Dr. Professor

AEI

NATIONAL AFFAIRS

Will, please come and see me during office hours. It is not too late to improve your grade this semester.

- Dr. Professor

Restoring the Academic Social Contract

C-

William Inboden

Your prose is good in this paper but the arguments are largely unsubstantiated and, apparently, deliberately misleading. I have some serious concerns! This essay looks more like propaganda, designed to deceive, than it does like good faith argumentation!

CURRENT ISSUE

HIGHER EDUCATION IN AMERICA SITS AT A PARADOX: American universities are simultaneously the crown jewel of the American education system and are also enduring their worst crisis in over a century. The crisis itself has multiple dimensions, including the financial challenges of escalating tuition and student debt burdens, the ideological imbalance among faculty and administrators, the institutional embrace of radical dogmas and speech restrictions, the resurgence of anti-Semitism, the deep ties many universities have forged with foreign nations whose interests are often inimical to the United States, and the new punitive measures that the Trump administration and Congress are wielding.

where is your proof?

what does this mean?

2

!!

Will, where in your paper do you provide evidence to back up any of these supposed crises?

Most fundamentally, the crisis is one of legitimacy and trust. It is now widely acknowledged that a critical mass of the American people has lost confidence in American

Could this be a manufactured crisis repeated Ad nauseam by neoconservative ideologues?

universities. In last year's Gallup poll, only 36% of Americans expressed high confidence in higher education, compared to 32% who held little or no confidence. The decline is recent and substantial: A decade ago, 57% of Americans voiced trust in higher education. Not surprisingly, the divide has a partisan dimension, as only 20% of Republicans and 35% of independents expressed confidence in academia, compared to 56% of Democrats (though the latter percentage has also declined, compared to 68% in 2015).

Polling only tells part of the story. The collapse in public trust also manifests in the restrictive measures that the Trump administration, Congress, and state governments have been deploying against universities of late. Political leaders would not pursue such policies if they were not popular with voters.

Hmm. This seems like an optimistic interpretation of political leadership; how do you explain sinking confidence rates in public institutions (including both higher education and the federal government)? See this source for examples and discussion of bias in confidence:

www.pew.org/en/trend/archive/fall-2024/americans-deepening-mistrust-of-institutions

The reasons for this plummeting public trust are many, but the underlying theme seems to be a sense that American universities as institutions have deviated from, or even turned against, the fundamental values of the nation and what was once quaintly known as "the American way of life."

Vague/unclear. What are "the nation's" fundamental values? Don't let your readers 'fill in the blank,' be concrete.

Is there one or many way(s) of American life? What does 'American life', and, for that matter, 'America,' denote here (ex., include Central/South America)? If you want to use this construction, strengthen with concrete examples and cite them.

Good move to establish credentials here, both professional and emotional.

I do not approach this subject with disinterest. I love the American university. I have spent much of my career in academia, most recently in academic leadership positions at the University of Florida and now at the University of Texas at Austin. As an undergraduate at Stanford University

The University of Florida's Alexander Hamilton School for Classical and Civic Education, which UF's then-president, former R-NE Senator Ben Sasse, hired you to lead, has been criticized for perceived targeting of UF faculty who opposed the center or critiqued its curriculum and independence from faculty governments.

and then graduate student at Yale, universities provided some of the most formative and enriching experiences of my early life. As a professor at the University of Texas at Austin and the University of Florida, these institutions have provided some of the most fulfilling years of my professional life. ~~And~~ as both a historian and a citizen, I ~~know~~ believe that the American university has been an exceptional source of our nation's power, prosperity, and goodness.

Awkward sentence structure, second clause does not properly modify the first clause.

Try: My time as a professor at the University of Texas at Austin and the University of Florida have been some of the most fulfilling years of my professional life.

Redundant. You've already said this twice above.

Most Americans love their universities, too — even those who have also lost trust in higher education. Indeed, the controversies buffeting academia are so contentious because the stakes are so high. Americans know intuitively that universities matter a lot to our nation. ~~From this knowledge flows the grief and anger over academia's problems, and the impassioned debates about what should be done.~~ We fight over universities because we care about them.

Tautological; contentious because the stakes are high? Explain the stakes or explain the controversies and their implications or remove.

Redundant; too much of this section is dedicated to the claim that people care about universities.

The problem has grown especially acute this decade, but it has been far longer in the making. Two anecdotes from my first year in graduate school in 1998 now loom large in my mind as harbingers of academia's troubled trajectory.

You've previously identified "problems" as including: student debt, ideological "imbalance," radical dogma, the silencing of speech, anti-Semitism, bad foreign investments, government punitiveness, and a crisis of trust and legitimacy, as well as implied that certain universities are vulnerable to infiltration from enemy nations. Certainly these problems are worth examination, if true. I would prefer to see a source (or multiple) cited for these claims.

The first occurred when I enrolled in the Ph.D. program in history at Yale after four years of working as a congressional staffer on Capitol Hill. Weary of partisan politics, I had returned to graduate school in hopes of becoming a professor. In a doctoral seminar during my first semester, a professor of American history visited our class

Why has the problem's acuteness increased this decade? Can you explain how "we" have been "fighting over" these problems in our universities? Remember, vagueness encourages readers to project their own meanings, which you may not intend. Your "intention" here, however, is crucial and should be as clear as possible.

to tell us about his work and career. He began by relating why he had first pursued his doctoral studies. "It was the fall of 1983, and I was waiting tables in Boulder, Colorado," he began.

> One evening I was watching the news and saw that war criminal Ronald Reagan had just ordered the invasion of Grenada. I was outraged at this presidential militarism and wanted to do something to resist it. So I decided to go to graduate school to become a professor.

People can have different reasons for doing things. Is one reason inherently better than the other?

Ok, I appreciate the inductive argumentation here—this is often an artful strategy to encourage a reader to agree with your conclusion. Here you express surprise that a professor's political convictions, to end human suffering, led them to graduate school. A commonplace motive, I agree. For what it's worth, I also went to graduate school because I wanted to fight for social justice and civil rights (initially as a lawyer).

It was a jarring moment for me, especially because it was so contrary to my decision. I had pursued graduate school to get away from politics; he had pursued it to advance his political activism.

I share this anecdote not because it is unusual, but because it's so commonplace. I have heard many variations on it from other professors over the years. In fact, the trend continues to this day. Last year Stanford history professor Jennifer Burns told the *New York Times* that in reading graduate-school applications, she would often encounter applicants who "would describe their political activism and then say, 'And now I will continue that work through my Ph.D.' They see academia as a natural progression." (Burns, to her credit, bemoaned this trend as inimical to open academic inquiry.)

What is your basis for claiming that this situation is commonplace? Anecdotal evidence is not a strong basis for argumentation. Do you have other kinds of evidence, surveys, scholarly studies, etc? Failure to cite sources can leave you at risk of looking like a fearmonger who resorts to sweeping truth claims to bolster your arguments; we try to avoid this at R1 universities.

Ok, so you are agreeing with Prof. Burns, that students who are activists should not pursue graduate school because it is "inimical to open academic inquiry." ... your argument here is that activists pursuing scholarship are doing "harm" to the "open academic inquiry" of higher education. At this juncture, it's helpful to define terms to avoid the "vagueness" writing issues you seem to be having. What is meant here by "open academic inquiry?" Can you clarify for revision?

The second vignette from my first semester of graduate school was even more disconcerting. My fellow students and faculty at the time knew that I had worked for a Republican member of Congress, and so in class discussions that touched on political issues, they would occasionally ask me to share what a conservative view would be. One evening after a doctoral seminar, the professor — a thoughtful and fair-minded progressive — pulled me aside and said:

> I need to caution you about something. You're one of the most capable graduate students I've taught, and you could have a promising academic career ahead of you. But you need to keep quiet and can't let anyone know that you're conservative. I sit on many faculty hiring committees, and I have seen over and over that my colleagues will not hire a conservative, no matter how good your scholarship is.

Most other conservative scholars, especially in the humanities and social sciences, could share similar firsthand experiences.

Over the past few decades, the combination of zealous progressives being drawn to academic careers and conservatives being discouraged (and sometimes even purged) from academia has cumulatively produced today's severe ideological imbalance of faculties and university administrations. The countless studies and surveys documenting this skew do not need to be recounted here.

Selection of evidence is vague. One person provided an anecdote that you then "confirm" without real evidence. "Most scholars could confirm this" is weak tea indeed. You're creating a straw man that is especially flimsy. Whither empiricism? I would encourage you to either seek out sources on political bias in faculty hiring or highlight a dearth of data on the topic to justify lack of citation.

Please provide an example of a scholar being 'purged' from academia because of their conservative views; are you sure 'purge' is the proper term here?

Why not? Isn't this the basis for your argument?

Suffice to say there are many humanities and social-science departments that do not have a single Republican on their faculties, and among social-science professors nationwide, there are more Marxists than conservatives. The only thing more remarkable than that ideological imbalance is how unremarkable most universities have regarded it — at least if judged by how little most university leaders (including deans, provosts, presidents, and governing boards) have done to address it over that time span.

Again, what evidence do you have to support this very ambitious claim?

Oh, so the ideological imbalance you mention above is finally defined here: the potentiality for Marxist faculty to outnumber conservative faculty. Have you defined "conservative" for your argument yet? What is meant by this? The "imbalance" of Marxists and conservatives is a new frame I have not seen before, and to me, it suggests a false binary (faculty are either Marxist or conservative) relying on an extreme claim; do many people in general identify as Marxists today? Are there studies to support this claim? If not, it is perhaps a useful idea to conduct an informal, anonymous poll off all instructors and staff about their political beliefs. That will perhaps give you the empirical data needed to marshal a more convincing argument to the Board of Regents.

But if academia is "politically imbalanced" as you claim, how do you explain the fact that you, an avowed conservative, have been appointed to such a high position at a flagship research university? Why isn't a "Marxist" in your position if they hold such supreme "ideological power" over the university?

But academia's political imbalance is not the whole story. The crisis confronting our universities is best understood as both a cause and a symptom of the core problem besetting higher education: the rupturing of its social contract with American society. This fundamental problem lies at the heart of the academy's loss of public trust. It's long past time for universities to meaningfully address it.

Finally, a thesis! This comes six pages in; generally, you'd want to put a thesis in the introduction. Here your structure is: 1. The university its at a paradox between its generalized value and its current critique; 2. Unrest concerns higher ed's abandonment of values and "the American way"; 3. Everyone loves the university and you have worked at them for a long time (hence, appeal to authority); and 4. the problem is that there are too many "Marxists" and not enough conservative scholars. Hence, all of this contributes to the dissolution of the social contract of higher ed with "American society." I think you can put this thesis up earlier with #2; there is a good place to mention the "contract" first. So when this statement comes here, it doesn't look like a new thesis but a return to it.

THE SOCIAL CONTRACT WITH THE ACADEMY

Over roughly the half-century from 1900 to 1950, a social contract emerged between research universities and the American public. At the outset of this era, elite teaching colleges such as Harvard, Yale, the University of Michigan, and the University of Wisconsin — along with newer institutions such as the University of Chicago, Stanford, Cornell, and Johns Hopkins — shifted to the research-based model of German universities. Whereas 19th-century professors had primarily taught undergraduates while doing

little if any research, by the *fin de siècle*, university faculty began conducting original research and training doctoral students.

Pervading these developments were features and terms that by the early Cold War had coalesced into a social contract between the American people and the nation's universities. Americans would extend to universities several benefits as part of this contract, including substantial federal funding for research and tuition; tax exemptions for philanthropic donations and endowment growth; the legal and cultural protections of tenure and academic freedom for professors; and the reputational capital and professional prestige of a university degree.

In return, universities were to provide several goods that can be captured in two broad categories: research that produced original discoveries of quality, meaning, insight, and usefulness; and an education that helped form students into honorable, productive citizens equipped to carry out the duties of self-government in our constitutional republic.

Interesting, During the first Red Scare and Wilson's massive propaganda effort to support getting into the war, U.S. higher ed quickly retooled toward "the new citizen," which was a resolutely partisan, political effort. Here you seem to be calling for a return to that.

One of the main issues identified with this practice of "fashioning students" through education (as diagnosed through reflection post-WWII) is that this form of education relied on propaganda that adversely affected students' ability to develop strong critical thinking. What do you mean, then, by "productive citizen?" Is there such a thing as an unproductive citizen? How would you define this?

Allow me to play devil's advocate to highlight a potential weakness of argument here: If citizenship is not a birthright (as many have argued lately), what would constitute legitimate civil productivity? Does engagement in "civilly productive" practices make one a citizen?

University leaders codified many of these principles as early as 1915, when the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) issued its "Declaration of Principles on Academic Freedom and Academic Tenure." Among other commitments, the declaration affirmed the "distinctive duty of the university to be the conservator of all genuine elements of value in the past thought and life of mankind

which are not in the fashion of the moment....[T]he university is, indeed, likely always to exercise a certain form of conservative influence."

National-security concerns accelerated the federal government's support for university research. During World War II, Massachusetts Institute of Technology scientist Vannevar Bush institutionalized this support through the federal Office of Scientific Research and Development, which birthed the Manhattan Project among other endeavors. Toward the end of the war, President Franklin Roosevelt directed Bush to design the permanent infrastructure for federal programs that would support national security and improve public health and economic growth. The resulting report, *Science: The Endless Frontier*, brought about the National Science Foundation. The report affirmed the importance of universities' academic freedom, promising that "freedom of inquiry must be preserved and should leave internal control of policy, personnel, and the method and scope of research to the institutions in which it is carried on."

The elements of this social contract were integrated and mutually reinforcing. Academic freedom guaranteed both liberty for individual scholars to research, teach, and speak on contested questions *and* institutional autonomy for universities to govern themselves on academic matters. Tenure protected the rights of scholars to pursue unexplored areas and controversial research, while federal funding provided the resources allowing them to do so. The

discoveries and products of this research would enhance the university's prestige and the nation's welfare, whether through tangible advances in medicine, engineering, technology, agriculture, and related areas, or through new insights on international relations, national security, efficient markets, and ennobling truths about the human condition.

The social contract also required universities to confront some internal tensions. Universities' freedom to critique American society and policies, for instance, was leavened by their commitment to upholding American ideals and the values of citizenship. They were to balance a dedication to basic research and the creation of knowledge with an appreciation for applied research, useful discoveries, and truth seeking.

Hmm. What is the difference between a contract and a quid-pro-quo? Seems to me a /social contract/ is based on trust and a demonstration of goodwill. A contract, legal or business, is transactional. You seem to imply the latter but in the name of the former. Can you reconcile this here with a few sentences?

Mindful of balancing these goods, the 1915 AAUP declaration spent as much time laying out the obligations of scholars as it did defending their rights. It also contained a prescient warning:

> If this profession should prove itself unwilling to purge its ranks of the incompetent and the unworthy, or to prevent the freedom which it claims in the name of science from being used as a shelter for inefficiency, for superficiality, or for uncritical and intemperate partisanship, it is certain that the task [of policing professors] will be performed by others [outside of academia].

Again you seem to be pummeling a straw man. You say there is a "prescient warning" in the quotation but which part and how so is unclear. I'm not sure how to read this other than a weaponization of this quote to imply that certain faculty members are "incompetent and unworthy," or participating in "uncritical and intemperate partisanship." Do you find it likely that "uncritical and intemperate partisanship" would make it through an academic review process? I would encourage you to reread the AAUP's founding charter in its entirety and consider replacing with a less polarizing quote to the same effect, such as:

If the universities are to render any such service toward the right solution of the social problems of the future, it is the first essential that the scholars who carry on the work of universities shall not be in a position of dependence upon the favor of any social class or group, that the disinterestedness and impartiality of their inquiries and their conclusions shall be, so far as is humanly possible, beyond the reach of suspicion.

The AAUP was clearly stating the "contract" forged with civil society and higher education here is that we have our own internal evaluation processes. Here the implication is that instructors and staff should be periodically purged to avoid external oversight. Is this what you are saying? Also, what do you think they meant by "incompetent" and "the unworthy." Do they define these terms, or are they left vague and open to interpretation? If the latter, do you think the legislature is justified in firing faculty on the basis of their personal, political beliefs? Are some personal, political beliefs (like, say, socialist commitments) "incompetent" and "unworthy" of academic freedom protections? Clarify after this offset quotation.

This social contract obtained for several decades. The American higher-education system became the finest in the world, and elite universities helped fuel America's ascent to global superpower in the second half of the 20th century. American academic research and technological innovation empowered both the American economy and the American military, contributing substantially to the peaceful victory of the United States and her allies in the Cold War. As historian Hal Brands observed: "One reason the U.S. economy had such a good Cold War was that the American university had an ever better one."

word choice?

Your logic here is problematic. You say that the universities, and the US, flourished during the Cold War, and yet you skate over the inconvenient fact that at the heart of this era was Noam Chomsky, Herbert Marcuse, Angela Davis, and other academics who increased the politicization of the academy. How did such "tenured radicals" flourish during your so-called golden age of the American university, if what is ailing the university now is (allegedly) the spiritual heirs to Chomsky, etc?

This arrangement was not without its buffets and tensions. It is almost *de rigueur* to cite William F. Buckley, Jr.'s classic 1951 lament, *God and Man at Yale*, as the nativity of conservative critiques of the academy's drift from American values. The following decade witnessed the campus protests and general tumult of the Vietnam era, followed by the dismissal of ROTC chapters and harassment of CIA recruiters on campus, further fraying the social contract.

How did these events "fray" the social contract? There is no single ideological position within our "constitutional republic." Many citizens were resolutely against the Vietnam War indeed in 1968 (when many of these events took place) public opinion was not in favor of the Vietnam War. A February 1968 (post-Tet) Gallup poll showed that only 32% of Americans approved of President Johnson's handling of the war, while 57% disapproved. In August 1968: A Gallup poll found that 53% of the public believed sending troops to Vietnam was a mistake, compared to just 35% who did not.

Still, the contract held together. In the decade and a half after the Cold War's end, federal funding for university research doubled, from $20 billion to $40 billion, and continued to climb to about $60 billion annually. Universities enjoyed almost unlimited freedom to govern themselves. Academic researchers produced pathbreaking discoveries and innovative findings in medicine, physics, chemistry, computer science, engineering, agriculture, and

Remember, however, this coincides with the rapid decrease in funding from the states for public education. For example, while higher ed rapidly corporatized with the STEM fields, most states drastically cut funding for public higher education. For example, state funding for the UT at Austin in 1991 was at roughly 34%, while by 2021 it was down to 10%. With periodic tuition caps, public universities in Texas have been asked increasingly to do more with less.

Is it reasonable to claim that universities have "enjoyed almost unlimited freedom to govern themselves?" Universities are fairly universally answerable to a board of regents, and public universities are answerable to their governing state and its politics, for example.

Source? Homer P. Rainy's 1971 book, /Between the Tower and the Dome: A Free University vs. Political Control/, is a very powerful rebuttal to this assumption. Texas higher education has never enjoyed "almost unlimited freedom." What about Pa Ferguson's rabid attempt to destroy UT at Austin for political reasons (1917). Too many exceptions here to even approach "unlimited freedom to govern themselves." Please research this paragraph more thoroughly and modify your claims accordingly.

many other fields. Meanwhile, American universities attracted some of the finest students and young scholars from other nations, further strengthening the American economy and our international standing. A college degree became the surest means of upward mobility and financial security in America.

In your opening paragraphs, you highlight international interest as detrimental to the American educational project; hoping to see how you chart this shift from "international interest strengthens America" to "American universities are susceptible to foreign influence."

RENEGING ON THE SOCIAL CONTRACT

All was not well, however. With the clarity of hindsight, we can see that present concerns over higher education continue an unfolding reckoning that first emerged in the late 1960s and escalated into the 1980s, with the campus controversies over the meaning of the liberal arts. From Jesse Jackson's leading protests at Stanford University, which drove the institution to jettison its required Western-civilization core curriculum, to Allan Bloom's bestselling lamentation, *The Closing of the American Mind*, in 1987, to Yale in 1995 rejecting a $20 million gift from the Bass family designated to fund a new Western-civilization program, these years saw academia begin to shirk its commitment to education for citizenship and to the Western tradition's centrality to the liberal arts.

Can you provide more evidence here? Jesse Jackson on campus, Bloom's critique (he was particularly upset by the Sony Walkman), and turning down a $20million gift in 1995 seems rather flimsy evidence for the claim that all of "academia" shirked its commitment to "education for citizenship" or teaching the Western intellectual tradition. What about counterexamples, such as the continued teaching of public speaking, debate, argumentation, and other skills courses that have always been taught with a commitment to an engaged citizenry? (And why are basic skills courses not included in the core curriculum anymore? Certainly the Texas workplace values such skills; this suggests that such skills are, in fact, central to the formation of "productive citizens," to return to your earlier argument.)

Not coincidentally, this era also witnessed the rise of campus speech codes, multi-culturalism, and "political correctness," the previous generation's antecedent to wokeness that similarly privileged progressive sensibilities

You are conflating PC and the "shirking" of commitment to education for citizenship. Do you really believe that universities decided "no more civics because now we do multiculturalism?"

This seems like an extreme situation, and requires the citation of at LEAST one authoritative source; your implication-as-assertion that we are now in an "era" of speech suppression and "wokeness" (is this sufficiently academic terminology?) weakens your argument significantly. Examine your selection of evidence for bias; failure to represent a complex situation in good faith can destroy a solid argument before it's even finished.

Describing "multiculturalism" as a practice that "seeks to suppress unfavored views" is poorly thought out at best, and invites serious questions about your understanding of cultures' value relative to each other. I can imagine this argument opening you up to accusations of white supremacist apologetics; I'm sure that wasn't your intention?

while seeking to suppress unfavored views. Consider this criticism of campus ferments from a prominent university president in 1990:

word choice?

> The most recent campus-based attacks on university traditions of free ideas, free speech, and academic standards based on merit take the form of "sensitivity" seminars or workshops designed to "correct" the thinking and attitudes of students, faculty, and staff. Based on the radical premise that the traditions of the university, indeed of Western civilization, are inherently racist, sexist, capitalist, and designed to deprive people of freedom, these "sensitivity" sessions have promulgated a "newspeak" that so distorts the common meanings of the terms "racism," "sexism," "harassment," and "abuse" as to make them useless for communication.

This was written by former University of Texas at Austin president Peter Flawn in his memoir-cum-primer on university leadership, which drew on his experiences in the presidency from the late 1970s and 1980s. That his criticism could just as well be written today as 35 years ago says much about the persistence of these tensions.

Yet if the current debates are not new, the severity of our contemporary crisis is. Two generations have passed since these controversies erupted in the 1980s. Over the ensuing years, many classically liberal scholars and administrators

This is a statement of someone's opinion about such trainings, it is not more valid as a statement per se, than that of a radical professor who states that Western civilization is "inherently racist, sexist, capitalist." In fact, there are scholarly standards, like "peer review" in place in doctoral training, research, and publishing that prevent scholars from making such broad claims without evidence.

How do we distinguish these standards from teaching "productive citizenship?" What are the similarities or differences? Elaborate below briefly or in a footnote.

Again your straw man dangles in the rhetorical wind.... Do you have any examples of "racism" being made useless as a result of college teaching? If so, would this really be a widespread problem?

Parenthetically note "newspeak" is a term from George Orwell's /1984/.

Also, Flawn wrote this a quarter century ago. Perhaps we have a better sense of what these terms mean? "Racism" is hating or discriminating against someone for their /perceived/ racial identification; "sexism" is the same regarding gender or sex identity," "harassment" refers in general to unwanted sexual or romantic advances—well defined in Title IX—and "abuse" means "hurting someone." Do you support Flawn's statement today? Our university codes define this terms fairly succinctly in legal terms (just google it).

As a historian you know better than to conflate historical contexts 35 years apart—radically different times, politics, social pressures, and so on. I'm surprised Will! Post Hoc therefore Propter Hoc? That's not a good argument.

have retired, and yesterday's activist graduate students and junior faculty have become many of today's senior faculty and university leaders.

I see, so "activist graduate students and junior faculty" are the problem here? Under whose definition are these individuals considered "activist"? What is your definition of "activist"? Again, consider that you and other conservatives are the "senior faculty and university leaders" in question.

Ironically, the indifference of too many academic leaders to the social contract extends to failures to honor academia's commitments to itself. Consider academic freedom: Over the past two decades, many of the most acute violations of academic freedom have stemmed not from politicians, but from within universities themselves.

So, again, your argument here is that former or current activists should not be teachers, is that right? And the reason is that activism does harm to open thought, yes? Be clear and consistent.

Ok, just a couple of issues here to strengthen your argument. First, what academic leaders are indifferent to their obligations to social society? Can you name them? If "too many" folks are indifferent, whence the need to write such an essay?

Second, the equivocation between the "social contract" and the transaction one (the quid-pro-quo) appears here again. Stick with one. Either you mean to argue the professoriate has abandoned a social contract to fashion "productive citizens," or you mean a transactional contract (you get money and tenure to serve the interests of the country). Or do you mean to conflate the transactional and the social contract on purpose?

A list of faculty in recent years who were punished in various ways (including investigations, canceled publications, official sanctions, demotions, or outright dismissals) by their university leadership or academic colleagues for expressing views that contravened progressive dogmas would include, among others: Joshua Katz (Princeton), Tyler VanderWeele (Harvard), Jay Bhattacharya (Stanford), Amy Chua (Yale), Carol Hooven (Harvard), Roland Fryer (Harvard), Ronald Sullivan (Harvard), Mark Regnerus (University of Texas), Ilya Shapiro (Georgetown), Dorian Abbott (University of Chicago, though his cancelation came courtesy of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology), Norman Wang (University of Pittsburgh), Bruce Gilley (Portland State University), Timothy Jackson (University of North Texas), and Scott Gerber (Ohio Northern University).

This list implies that these noble conservative scholars were "punished" without good reason, yet the only example from your own institution is extremely controversial. According to Wikipedia's article about Regnerus's highly ideological and allegedly unethical research into gay couples as parents, "Two hundred social scientists, led by Gary Gates, signed the "Letter to the editors and advisory editors of Social Science Research",[15] in which they express their concern "about the academic integrity of the peer review process for this paper as well as its intellectual merit."[16]

All of these figures listed were either punished /or/ simply critiqued publicly for saying things that were perceived as racist, homophobic, and so on. Is that right?

see reverse side of paper for comments on each of these people...

Inboden's Gallery of Martyrs, pt.1

In 2021, The Daily Princetonian reported that Katz had been suspended in 2018 for engaging in a consensual sexual relationship with a student in violation of university policy. In May 2022, he was fired after a second investigation concluded that he had lied during the 2018 sexual misconduct investigation. https://www.dailyprincetonian.com/article/2021/02/alumni-allegations-princeton-joshua-katz

Amy Chua was never cancelled for her "conservative" ideas. She faced public criticism and professional consequences in 2021 after a report alleged she violated a 2019 agreement with Yale Law School to stop socializing with students. Following a 2019 agreement with Yale Law School, Chua and her husband, Jed Rubenfeld, were no longer to interact with students outside of class. This agreement was made after an internal investigation found Rubenfeld guilty of sexual harassment.

Sullivan's decision to lead the defense team for Harvey Weinstein met with criticism from Harvard University students, faculty, and administrators, including an online petition by students seeking his removal as Faculty Dean of Winthrop House. A letter supporting Sullivan, signed by 52 Harvard Law School professors, appeared in The Boston Globe on March 8, 2019. Following the aforementioned criticism, as well as subsequent allegations by Winthrop House students, tutors, and staff of a toxic environment under Sullivan and Robinson stretching back to 2016, the Dean of Harvard College, Rakesh Khurana, announced on May 11, 2019, that he would not renew the appointments of Sullivan and Robinson as Faculty Deans when their appointments expired on June 30, 2019. Sullivan remains on the faculty of Harvard.

VanderWeele co-signed an amicus brief in 2015 that argued against same-sex marriage. This sparked public condemnation, social media campaigns against him, and criticism from students and some colleagues, but no professional sanctions. In fact, the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health issued a statement affirming academic freedom. His academic publications remain protected by academic freedom, he was not fired and he continues his work at Harvard. Academic freedom protects you from being fired for unpopular opinions, but it does not prevent you from being condemned by the public for those views.

In 2021, Hooven participated in a television interview in which she stated that while gender identities should be respected, there are only two biological sexes that are "designated by the kinds of gametes we produce". This led to a backlash against her by faculty and members of the student body. In January 2023, she left her position feeling she had no support from the administration.

Georgetown investigated Shapiro after he tweeted that Sri Srinivasan, chief judge of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit, would be President Biden's "best pick" for the Supreme Court. He continued: "But alas [Srinivasan] doesn't fit into latest intersectionality hierarchy so we'll get lesser black woman." Shapiro's "lesser black woman" phrasing gained considerable attention on Twitter and within the Georgetown community, and led Georgetown Law Dean William Treanor to denounce the tweet as "appalling" and "at odds with everything we stand for at Georgetown Law." After a 122 day investigation Georgetown found that since Shapiro had made the comments before starting as executive director for the Georgetown Center for the Constitution, he had not broken the university code of conduct. Nevertheless, Shapiro resigned from his position.

Bhattacharya was shadow-banned on Twitter for his position on testing, masking, and herd immunity during COVID, but he maintained his position at Stanford the entire time and is now director of NIH.

In March 2018, Harvard barred Fryer from his research lab, the Education Innovation Laboratory (EdLabs), upon launching an investigation into Title IX complaints against him alleging sexual harassment. He was suspended from the Harvard faculty for two years without pay. Harvard determined that upon Fryer's return to the faculty, he would be barred from serving as an adviser or supervisor, from access to graduate fellows, and from teaching graduate workshops, but permitted him to teach graduate classes. Fryer had been one of Harvard's most highly paid professors. Harvard permanently closed his lab in September 2019. In 2021, Harvard allowed Fryer to return to teaching and research.

Regenerus's research on same sex families has been roundly criticized by scholarly peers and yet he remains on UT's faculty and was recently appointed to president Jim Davis's "Academic Integrity Advisory Council." In a 2012 population-based study of his, which was published in Social Science Research, Regnerus oncluded that people who had had a parent who had been in a same-gender relationship were at a greater risk of several adverse outcomes, including "being on public assistance, being unemployed, and having poorer educational attainment." This generated protracted debate and controversy, including a disavowal the American Sociological Association, "which takes the position that the conclusions he draws from his study of gay parenting are fundamentally flawed on conceptual and methodological grounds and that findings from Dr. Regnerus' work have been cited inappropriately in efforts to diminish the civil rights and legitimacy of LBGTQ partners and their families." Two hundred social scientists, led by Gary Gates, signed the "Letter to the editors and advisory editors of Social Science Research", in which they express their concern "about the academic integrity of the peer review process for this paper as well as its intellectual merit."

Inboden's Gallery of Martyrs, pt.2

A lecture by Abbot at MIT was cancelled after he co-wrote an editorial, with Stanford professor Ivan Marinovic in which they argued for renewed focus on individual talent in university admissions and hiring. They called for abolishing "group membership" preferences, including race and legacy preference in university admissions, and criticized aspects of university diversity policy. Defending the lecture cancellation, senior MIT officials stated that controversy over Abbott's views on diversity would "overshadow" the scientific content of his public lecture. Abbot ultimately delivered his lecture on planetary science to a larger audience hosted by the James Madison Program in American Ideals and Institutions at Princeton University on the same day as the cancelled event.

The Pitt School of Medicine removed Norman Wang, a cardiologist and an associate professor of Medicine, from a his position as program director of the Electrophysiology Fellowship following social media backlash against a "white paper" he wrote criticizing affirmative action efforts in the medical field. He retained his teaching position.

In 2020-2021 Jackson was involved in a controversy in relation to a special issue of the Journal of Schenkerian Studies responding to a plenary talk at the Society for Music Theory (SMT) by Philip Ewell. The special issue was repudiated by the SMT's board of trustees, and drew mainstream press coverage. Jackson's management of the journal was criticized by graduate students for "platforming racist sentiments," as well as a "lack of peer review, publication of an anonymous response, and clear lack of academic rigor". On January 14, 2021, Jackson filed a lawsuit against eight members of the University of North Texas Board of Regents, seventeen faculty members in the Division of Music History, Theory, and Ethnomusicology, and one PhD student and teaching fellow, alleging violation of his First Amendment rights and defamation of character. After four years of litigation, the lawsuit finally settled in July 2025. In the settlement, Jackson received $725,000 from UNT in damages and legal costs plus full restoration of the Journal of Schenkerian Studies, plus full control over it."

Gilley gained international acclaim but also a storm of criticism for his highly controversial peer-reviewed article "The Case for Colonialism," published in an advance online edition of the scientific journal Third World Quarterly in 2017. Fifteen members of the journal's board resigned over Gilley's article. Critics described the article as low-quality and said that it was published, over the objections of reviewers, and as a form of academic clickbait.

Known for his work on Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas, Gerber authored articles defending Thomas and articles arguing against a bill to ban the teaching of "divisive concepts" at Ohio colleges. Gerber defended portions of the same bill, which Ohio lawmakers revived this year, writing to the Cincinnati Enquirer in March 2023 to complain that "jobs are frequently set aside for minorities and women" so conservative white men "need not apply." Gerber started raising concerns about alleged racial and gender preferences in hiring at the law school after Ohio Northern formed a commission to further diversity, equity and inclusion on campus in 2021. Gerber became particularly concerned after he observed none of the six finalists for one job at the law school were white men, which he determined to be a "statistically improbable coincidence in the absence of discrimination," and after he learned of a questionnaire from the American Bar Association in which university officials reported "paying attention to diversity" in hiring, according to the lawsuit. The University requested he resign and after a lawsuit they reinstated him.

James Sweet is a prominent historian who received mild public pushback on a presidential essay he wrote as president of the AHA, in which he criticized contemporary historians for "presentism". He is very famous, well-paid and respected.

In other cases, such as that of the University of Wisconsin's James Sweet, professors who published disfavored views may not have suffered formal sanction, but rather a scholar-led campaign of vilification and social-media outrage that produced the same practical effect: academic ostracism, a self-flagellating apology, and a deterrent to other scholars from expressing heterodox views that transgress progressive orthodoxies.

You don't need to list this many examples to support your claim; better to find one to three strong examples and actually explain them, whether in the body of the text or in footnotes. Don't make your reader do your research. Allow me to present an opposing example, of a conservative scholar with a heterodox view who has entirely avoided the negative consequences you list:

Adrian Vermeule, Harvard's professor of constitutional law, espouses Catholic integralism, the belief that the only valid form of government is a state subordinate to and advised by the Catholic Church. Since his 2016 conversion to Catholicism and adoption of integralism, Vermeule has stated that he puts "little stock or faith in the law... [if] the polity and culture in which it is embedded... sours and curdles, so will the law." Vermeule's worldview is reliant on the Catholic conception of 'natural law'; in other words, it encourages an exclusive understanding of life, morality, and identity, tying the value of a life to its being lived in accordance with Christian tenets. Despite the veritable witch hunt that I have illustrated above, Vermeule's retention of his illustrious position at the oldest institution of higher learning in the United States suggests that all may not yet be lost in the fight for true freedom of speech in American universities.

Do you see how the inclusion of an opposing example can actually strengthen your argument through balance?

In none of these cases did the relevant university presidents or the AAUP unequivocally and publicly defend scholars' academic freedom. Instead, they often chastised the targeted professors — demonstrating just the sort of "intemperate partisanship" the AAUP had warned against over a century ago.

So you are arguing the AAUP is a nest hypocrisy? That they should hold to the 1915 doctrines? AAUP should no longer be listened to? Presumably this is also why the Faculty Council was dissolved, because university professors have no true insight into how the university is governed to help restore the "social contract" of the academy? Be clear.

STEM AND THE CHINA PROBLEM

Good attention grab, but are you sure this is what you want to go with? No scare quotes, even?

The two pillars of university obligations to the social contract — producing meaningful and useful research for the nation, and teaching students the values of citizenship — have eroded as well.

Thanks for the summary, I was getting lost in the contract equivocations. So, the quid-pro-quo is that higher ed gets funding and tenure in exchange for producing research and citizens. That helpfully simplifies. Perhaps put this more succinctly above at the beginning of the social contract section for clarity?

In the range of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields, universities have produced pathbreaking research and valuable innovations almost too prodigious to catalogue. As Thomas Lehrman and George Gilder recently observed, "U.S. university research backed by public funds has fostered such innovations as the Global Positioning System, cancer therapies, recombinant DNA,

and magnetic resonance imaging, or MRI." ~~Many other discoveries and inventions could be added to this list.~~ The American people live longer and healthier lives, enjoy more conveniences and security, and have more prosperity and abundance, all thanks to academic research.

Doesn't contribute anything.

The problem, however, is that too often this research has also benefited the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). In recent years, many American universities have undermined the social contract with their uncritical embrace of China. After all, the social contract obligates universities to do research for the good of the United States. This does not preclude providing benefits to other nations and to humanity in general, but it does preclude assisting (even if sometimes unwittingly) the military and intelligence services of a hostile adversary.

Since the end of the Cold War, many American universities have built deep partnerships with China at almost every level of academic life. These include extensive scientific collaborations, joint degree programs, student and faculty exchanges, study-abroad centers, research sponsored by Chinese corporations, executive education programs, and the welcoming of over 3 million Chinese students and scholars to study and research at American universities. The CCP zealously promoted and funded this strategy of academic engagement, and American universities requited the CCP's embrace. Harvard alone received a reported $560 million from Chinese entities from 2010 to 2025.

Thanks for the summary, I was getting lost in the contract equivocations. So, the quid-pro-quo is that higher ed gets funding and tenure in exchange for producing research and citizens. That helpfully simplifies. Perhaps put this more succinctly above at the beginning of the social contract section for clarity?

word choice?

I have taken the liberty of attempting to cite a source for you. https://www.nytimes.com/2025/07/07/us/harvard-china-white-house-funding.html This article points out that that $560 million, which comes from a mix of private and government sources in both China and Hong Kong, falls within Harvard's $9.6 BILLION bucket of post-2008 international fundraising.

Many of these collaborations with China were benign and even beneficial to the United States. Some of them began during the now bygone era of America's strategic-engagement posture toward China, when the U.S. government encouraged the deepening of commercial and diplomatic ties with Beijing. But as we now know — and had many indications of much earlier — the CCP leveraged these partnerships with American universities in significant part to enhance China's power, especially its military and intelligence services. In recent decades, the U.S. government estimates that the CCP has purloined up to $600 billion worth of American technology each year — some of it from American companies, but much of it from American universities — in the most lucrative espionage-collection campaign in history.

Are you at risk of equivocating a state with its people? International students are not a teeming mass of foreign agents.

As Chairman John Moolenaar of the U.S. Congress's Select Committee on the Chinese Communist Party recently warned in a letter to several American university presidents, "U.S. universities inadvertently act as incubators for China's technological and military advancements," and "American academic institutions risk facilitating the very innovation that the Chinese government seeks to use to outcompete and surpass the United States."

word choice?

A similarly complicated scenario obtains among Chinese students and scholars at American universities. Many of these individuals are apolitical, enterprising strivers who come to American universities for the abundant educational, research, and professional opportunities on

offer. They rank among the top experts in their fields, and are model students and colleagues who strengthen their departments. At the University of Texas at Austin, we are fortunate to have quite a few such students and scholars. Some of them are also dissidents, quietly (or in some cases openly) critical of the CCP, and grateful for the religious and political freedoms they enjoy in the United States. We should welcome and support, and our universities should embrace, this cohort wholeheartedly.

good, but foreground this to head off misinterpretation at the pass

Yet a troubling number of other Chinese students and scholars at American universities are engaged in espionage. Some are clandestine CCP intelligence officers, while others have been coerced or enlisted by CCP security services and deployed to American universities to steal technology, gather intelligence, promote CCP propaganda, recruit other students and scholars to spy for China, and monitor (and sometimes menace) other Chinese students and scholars.

Sources? There have been some isolated incidents, however, this is a claim from the Trump White House that has not been substantiated. Can you provide evidence for this claim. Other media outlets have decried the isolation of Chinese students in the US akin to the rhetoric around the 1882 Exclusion Act.

According to ProPublica, the failure of higher education is actually not protecting Chinese students from government oppression (or other Chinese students who report them) abuse. Would it not be better to focus on helping and protecting Chinese students from the CCP?

In these failures to be vigilant against the CCP espionage threat, universities have also failed their other Chinese students. Among those most harmed by the extensive CCP intelligence presence on campuses are the Chinese students and scholars who do not support the party. They came to the United States in search of freedom to think, say, and believe what they wish. Instead, they have faced surveillance and intimidation from Beijing.

This is true. Is this not the actual problem? Why not?

I witnessed this phenomenon several years ago when I planned to host a prominent Chinese dissident for a lecture at the University of Texas. As word spread on campus about the event, multiple Chinese students reported being warned not to attend, and the dissident himself received chilling threats from Chinese callers. At his request, we canceled the public event and instead held a private meeting with him in our home. On another occasion, when we hosted a Uighur dissident to talk about his family's persecution at the hands of the CCP, several of our Chinese students reported being threatened by Chinese sources on social media and feared that attending the event could put them at risk.

Again, this sounds like you're conflating security risks with certain malcontents in the Chinese international student body population; were the threats FROM other international students? Clarify or consider recontextualizing.

The challenge for the United States lies in welcoming the reform- and achievement-minded Chinese students and scholars while blocking the espionage-minded ones — and discerning who is who. The U.S. government (principally the State Department, the Central Intelligence Agency, and the Federal Bureau of Investigation) bears primary responsibility for these screenings, beginning with the visa-application process. American universities also need to be attentive to the national-security aspects of engaging with Chinese students and scholars. The problem is not that universities on occasion have made mistakes; it is that for many years, universities did not even try, but instead looked the other way or even disdained cooperation with American intelligence and law enforcement.

Did you have an incident in mind here? What examples can you provide? Sources? Yes, you have established your credibility as an educator and administrator, but is that enough to make these kinds of claims without evidence?

The corrosive irony for the social contract is this: The American government's massive support for academic research originated at the outset of the Cold War in an effort to counter the Soviet Union. Now that same system of federal research support has provided substantial benefits to America's adversary in the new Cold War with China.

So what is the solution you are proposing here? Be clear. Are you implying the U.S. government is justified in cutting higher education funding because of Chinese student spies? This is the implication, but it's vague and unclear. Can you be more concrete here?

THE DECLINE (AND RENEWAL?) OF THE LIBERAL ARTS

If the problem for some sectors of STEM fields has been producing research of value to the CCP, the problem for some sectors of the liberal arts has been producing research of much value at all.

Wow, this is quite a statement. I look forward to reading your examples of valueless research!

Of course, many social-science and humanities scholars produce works of profound insight, brilliance, usefulness, and even beauty. The liberal arts are often known as the "intellectual heart" of the university for good reason. Yet few would say that the liberal arts overall are in a state of good health. The precipitous decline in the number of undergraduate humanities majors nationwide over the past decade or so is widely lamented but rarely addressed. There are many factors, including tuition costs and employer preferences, that make humanities majors less appealing for professional careers. But without doubt part of the decline also comes from students voting with their feet about the types of classes they want to take.

The claim here, best as I can understand, is that, aside from tuition costs, the decline of courses in the liberal arts has to do with a decline in enrollment. The University of Austin, however, has over 10k majors in the College of Liberal Arts, the most of any unit at the university. Overall, UT's enrollment is at a record high. What evidence can you provide about a decline in interest in the liberal arts? Sources?

Many universities have responded by cutting or consolidating liberal-arts departments, eliminating faculty lines, and reducing research budgets and the numbers of doctoral students in these fields. The cuts are both a cause and a consequence of the decline (and in some cases near extinction) of important subfields such as military and intellectual history; Renaissance and early modern literature; public law, political theory, and qualitative international relations; and so forth.

The travails of the liberal arts also stem from a conceptual shift in the epistemology of several humanities and social-science fields of study. Some have embraced the dogma that the most important dimension of human existence is identity. A person or group's racial and sexual identities are seen as the most fundamental factors to study in order to understand them. From this follows a corollary focus on the power structures that sift and sort those identities and the framing of the social order, primarily into a dichotomy between oppressors and oppressed. It also produces scholarship that can be quite esoteric and jargon infused, sometimes to the point of parody, as shown by the "Grievance Studies Affair" a few years ago when three academic pranksters successfully published several fabricated articles in scholarly journals devoted to various flavors of cultural studies and critical theory.

The identity-studies framework is not without insight. Race and gender are important parts of who we are and how we interact with each other (and yes, how we sometimes

Hmm. Does the study of identity, which is so important to so many people, equate to the embrace of a "dogma?" Critiques of identity are more common in the humanities than not, and this may be a case of confusing the research produced internal to the university and how it is discussed and reported outside of the university (in opinion pieces such as this).

My impression is that the focus in the humanities has been actually on structures, not individual identities. In fact, a critique of us/them thinking ("identitarian logic," in philosophy) seems more central to scholarship than polemic.

The "Grievance Studies Affair," like the "Sokal Hoax" and numerous pranks afterward is hilarious. But are these representative of the whole of scholarship of "cultural studies" and "critical theory?" Do you argue those who study critical/cultural studies all write in "esoteric" and "jargon infused" prose? Is there a place for jargon? For example, would we call on engineers to dumb down their schematics at Boeing? NASA? CDC? You use the term "epistemology" in this paragraph; some would consider that jargon. Is there any justification for specialized language?

Are race and gender studies "identity" focused, or are they focused on groups, social structures, ideology, and so forth in terms of examining the ways that they contribute to or ward against oppression and discrimination? The critique of identitarian thinking, I think, is central to race and gender studies. This is the difference, for example, between "second wave" and "third wave" feminism. Identity-based politics was necessary, say, in the 1970s. I don't really see how our investments in the liberal arts today are still wedded to 1970s thinking. Can you provide some examples?

oppress each other). Academic freedom protects such scholarship, and a genuinely pluralist academia will include scholars who focus on such areas as part of a faculty with a broad and diverse range of views. Yet when such schools of thought, often accompanied by partisan activism, exert an intolerant hegemony that captures entire departments or even fields, it suffocates meaningful academic inquiry. It also imperils the academic freedom of scholars who dissent from the department line.

Yes if true, but show me where this is happening. For a problem you claim is widespread, you have a problem with telling instead of showing your reader.

As an intellectual matter, classifying people and societies in race and gender terms or oppressor/oppressed binaries offers an incomplete, and at times impoverished view of the human person, the communities we form, and the endeavors we undertake. It also focuses more on what divides us, at the intellectual expense of what unites us in our shared personhood. While social divisions and oppressions are endemic to human existence and must be studied, the core concept of the "humanities" is what it means to be human and what we hold in common.

This is a very reasonable conclusion to binarist thought. Are you sure this is the "party line," or is this perhaps a projection about /what you think/ is the party-line?

Hmm. Seems to me all humanistic efforts are invested in what we hold in common, while acknowledging what is pulling us apart. I wonder: what if the accusation actually creates what it decries? For example, we know there was not an invasion of Communists during the McCarthy era; sure, a few here and there, but it was mostly a paper tiger. This is the U.S.'s "counter-subversive" tradition, claiming subversion exists when it does not actually brings it into being. Is this really how most liberal arts teachers think? How do you know? What are your sources here?

In this respect, arguably more important than how we identify are what we believe, whom we believe it with, and what we do. What kind of ideas do we hold about justice, freedom, love, order, equality, government, God, human nature, time, the Good, the True, and the Beautiful? What do we believe about ourselves, our families, our communities, our nation, our world? How do we form social organizations and engage in collective behavior, whether cooperation, competition, or conflict? How should

Incomplete sentence/fragment. Need a subject and verb. Remember, you're not writing ad-copy. This is a manifesto and needs to be carefully advanced in full, standard English.

In terms of content, identity and belief are not mutually exclusive. To play devil's advocate, to identify as a white supremacist is to believe that you are superior to other racial groups, to participate in this belief with others who share it, and to carry out actions that demonstrate your espousal of that viewpoint. Obviously, this is an extreme example, but it illustrates the danger of discussing belief and subsequent action in a vacuum.

I would highlight here that this is a reference to the Scholastic movement, which is an explicitly Catholic intellectual movement. It's not unacceptable to make religious references, but I would be very careful with how you treat and contextualize them. You don't want to look like your personal faith is eclipsing your scholarly worldview.

we think about this life and the possibility of the next life? Such questions are pushed aside in an academy dominated by identity concerns.

This is fallacious reasoning, of course, a false dichotomy. Is not, for example, once's racial background and gender identity to be ignored in the pursuit of /eudaimonia/, flourishing? How does, for example, an intersex person flourish if they are not permitted to consider how the world has treated folks like them (in some cultures, revered and two worlds, in others, an abomination). Why do the big questions, such as those regarding God, preclude an examination of the representation of Christ as an anglo-White man? Too many counter-examples here to make such a facile statement even remotely close to the truth or rules of thinking themselves.

As a result, too many American history courses present the American past as a litany of oppressions and hypocrisies, leaving students with an imbalanced view of the United States. A few years ago, I taught a seminar on international relations to master's degree students. During a class session on how the American War of Independence caused a geopolitical shock to the 18th-century era of empire, I quoted in passing a few lines from the Declaration of Independence. These words were greeted by blank stares among the 25 or so students in the class. I paused and asked how many of the students had ever before read the Declaration of Independence. Only two hands went up. I then asked how many of the students had ever read anything from the *1619 Project*. Virtually every hand went up.

Examples? Do you have some specific history courses at UT at Austin, or elsewhere, in mind? Be concrete.

Interesting. As a personal aside, I find myself doubting the veracity of this anecdote, but let's stick to examining your argument. In general, founding documents are read in high school (often in grade school). Is it the fault of higher education that students are coming to college without a basic knowledge of the country's founding documents? From its inception, U.S. Public Education took up the task of teaching literacy for the "industrial classes," which including writing and speaking instruction. This instruction is now left to the university, which we have been doing. The overall point about generational ignorance about basic civics is not to be leveled at the university—it's secondary education. You seem to be mislevelling blame here.

It is perhaps no coincidence that levels of patriotism among young Americans born from 1997 onward have reached a modern nadir. A recent Gallup survey found that only 41% of that generation say they are "proud to be an American." It is hard to love something you know little about or have only heard criticisms of. Such are the downstream effects of a simplistic and incomplete rendering of the American story, which disregards the richness, complexity, and singularity of our nation's past while deepening the broader deficit of civic formation.

So, is the suggestion here that higher ed should make students more patriotic? What what is meant by "patriotic" here? A love of country, or something else? Also, is it possible to love one's country (once's fellow citizens) and simultaneously be critical of state and federal policies that harm people? If a scholar or filmmaker is critical of how the U.S. government turned away Jewish immigrants during German genocide, are they no longer patriotic? The either/or thinking in many of your claims like this cut against the "paradox" with which you began.

If I understand your claim here, unless you are "proud" and profess "love" for one's country, you are not patriotic?

Is not "either/or" and dichotomous thinking also "simplistic?"

These concerns now even emanate from technology entrepreneurs. One of the most impassioned voices today calling for a return to teaching Western civilization and American foundations is a technology CEO, Alex Karp of Palantir. Having witnessed the civic wasteland that a Silicon Valley bereft of transcendent values and meaning has become, Karp bemoans that America now lacks a "thicker conception of belonging" based on "a story of what the American project has been, is, and will be — what it means to participate in this wild and rich experiment in building a republic."

The assumption here is that universities no longer teach "Western civilization and American foundations." Where is the evidence of this? Do we not have an entire departments dedicated to exactly this? Depts. of Government? American Studies? Communication? Isn't this what the new and sizeable School of Civic Leadership addresses? They have over 20 full time faculty and a recent donation from the recency of 100 million dollars? UT's own evidence refutes the assumption these topics are not taught or taken seriously.

What does technological production have to do with transcendent value? Production in America has long been rife with corruption; is there a single AP US History class that doesn't discuss Sinclair's The Jungle?

See reverse side...

This narrowing of the liberal arts has also contributed to the decline in the number of conservative scholars in academia. Since conservatives generally gravitate to fields of study such as diplomatic, military, and intellectual history, or political theory and public law, the winnowing of those fields led to further marginalization of conservative scholars — and, crucially, conservative would-be scholars — who are either eased out of academia or discouraged from even trying to enter it in the first place. As Steven Teles observed in these pages last year:

you already name dropped these earlier; either combine the two segments where you discuss it, or find another, less repetitive way to tie them back together

> At some point in conservatives' disappearance from elite-university faculties, cause and effect begin to merge. One reason conservatives fail to enter graduate school is that there are so few conservative faculty members with whom they can study, or who play a role in graduate admissions and recruitment. A few departments allow conservatives to train graduate

What about public universities? What disappearance is Teles talking about? Can you clarify parenthetically here or in a footnote?

Where is the data to support this? What evidence does Teles use to support this claim? Or are you just taking his word because he also identifies as a conservative and publishes in this journal?

"This narrowing of the liberal arts..."

Alrighty Will, we have another equivocation fallacy. So far you have argued the liberal arts are on the decline for failing to teach civics—which I've suggested is false—and for research that benefits China through espionage. The argument has been qualitative and about value, to wit: the liberal arts have lost their way. Here, however, you're switching to "the narrowing of liberal arts," which is somewhat of a quantitative claim about topics researched and taught. Actually, a cursory review of meta analyses about what is taught shows quite the opposite: areas of specialization have actually expanded. Here, you seem to be suggesting the "narrowing" refers to the decline of conservative professors in the liberal arts: this is a new claim. Do you have evidence here of conservative "brain drain?" So far you have discussed a handful of firings or public shamings of professors whose remarks were perceived as hateful (racist, homophobic, etc). But do you have some real data to suggest a slimming of conservative professorship? Or, was it often or usually the case the progressives were always the dominant class at public universities?

students, but they are generally at institutions with less-than-elite prestige and often in fields with relatively low demand for doctoral students. As a consequence, they rarely place their students at top-tier universities once they graduate.

It is not just the humanities and social sciences: Other academic areas of human behavior and social organization where faculty views on political matters hold direct relevance for research and teaching include law, education, public policy, journalism, social work, and public health. Conservative faculty are also demonstrably underrepresented in these fields.

Source.

Let us assume this is true, however. Are there other reasons conservatives might not be going into higher education? Could it be, for example, becoming a teacher is rarely lucrative? Could it be that those who go into teaching are idealists, conservative or liberal (and everything in between or otherwise; the binary is false, again)? Are you politicizing an issue that may be, in the last instance, an economic problem (e.g., compensation)?

The issue is not one of partisan balance, but a balance of perspectives. Universities best serve their missions when they expose both scholars and students to multiple viewpoints. When faculties hold nearly monolithic convictions on topics such as sexual ethics, race, gender, the family, economic policy, immigration, abortion, guns, criminal justice, war and peace, and other critical issues that divide the country — and on which people of good will can disagree in good faith — important perspectives are lost in both research and teaching.

I think you will find universal agreement here; no need for evidence. I know few educators who would not profess to believe this.

This would be true if we bracket higher ed from "reality" or as integral to culture itself. Considered /as/ a part of civil society, however, think about this: Most colleges and universities (which exceptions, mostly in the Ivies) are run by very conservative boards of regents or visitors or trustees. In almost every instance these governing individuals are political appointments, often if not mostly without any experience in education. For example, the University of Texas System regents are mostly land developers, business leaders, former politicians, so on. Currently, the president of UT at Austin has no background in education, has never published research, and has never taught in a classroom. What this means for Texas is that we have been governed by conservatives for most of the life of the university.

It is reasonable to ask whether a scholar's views matter at all as long as the professor presents a range of perspectives in the classroom. A notable new study speaks to this question, showing how a progressive monoculture pervades many university courses and required readings. Scholars

Insofar as a key assumption of this manifesto is that the professoriate by and large is too "liberal," and insofar dominant culture, often represented by the regency who are political appointees, is baseline conservative, would it not be the case to present students with viewpoints on "sexual ethics, race, gender, family," and so on, that challenges the status quo? The argument for more conservative "representation" here is in tension with the argument against a focus on identity politics. Ironic. You may want to iron out these ironic wrinkles in revision.

Jon Shields, Stephanie Muravchik, and Yuval Avnur surveyed several thousand university syllabi for the readings assigned on three controversial subjects: race and criminal justice, abortion, and the Israel-Palestinian conflict. Across all three issues, the study found that professors overwhelmingly assigned well-known texts favored by progressives — such as Michelle Alexander's *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*, Ta-Nehisi Coates's *Between the World and Me*, Judith Jarvis Thomson's "A Defense of Abortion," and Edward Said's *Orientalism* — while very rarely including readings that present critiques or contrary views in the same syllabi. Perhaps our cognitive biases hold us more intellectually captive than we realize.

What if "contrary" views are factually wrong? Are you suggesting here that, say, Richard B. Spencer's writings extolling white supremacy should be read alongside Martin Luther King's "Letter from a Birmingham Jail"? Should higher education teachers be forced toward "both side-ism" pedagogy? Irrelevant of the progressive or conservative bias of a text (and all texts are biased, as are humans in general), is it imperative that educators teach creationism in biology labs? Think harder about the logic of what you are saying.

Most educators spend over a decade or more studying how to teach and research. Most politicians do not. You are arguing for the deliberate politicization of higher education. Just be explicit about this as underwriting the both-side-ism approach to pedagogy.

Many university leaders are coming to terms with the costs of this academic monoculture. Johns Hopkins University president Ronald Daniels recently wrote:

> We should be asking instead why so many disciplines suffer from a dearth of conservative faculty in the first place and what the consequences of that imbalance are. Throughout my career, I have seen many brilliant conservative scholars flee the academy for think tanks, where they feel their ideas will be more readily welcomed. This brain drain cannot be healthy for the university. If the professoriate continues to congregate on the political left, it shortchanges conservative and liberal students alike.

An authority you want to cite? Daniels has been subject to a series of critiques from his university community for a number of undemocratic "reforms" in line with the Trump administration's refashioning of higher education. Is the answer to a perceived "imbalance" and "left-wing" dogma to rid universities of the left, or to hire more conservative faculty at a salary that is not insulting? Calling for a range of views requires the infrastructure to support it, and that means paying more center or left-center teachers a salary they will accept. Could the answer for the lack of conservative faculty be that they refuse to work for free?

Relatedly, is it possible to separate conservative views from the Trump administration? This is the elephant in the room this manifesto fails to address.

Clearly, it is not only conservatives who perceive this problem.

In line with last comment, citing Daniels here does not allow for this argument; Daniels IS a conservative. Consider replacing with a quote from someone whose political positions better support your argument.

RESTORING THE SOCIAL CONTRACT

Taken together, these several trends — of universities' failing to uphold academic freedom, of their increasing ideological imbalance, of some departments' adopting a posture of relentless criticism of the United States, of entire disciplines' succumbing to esoterica — have eroded higher education's fulfillment of its part of the social contract.

Wait, this is a new claim. To this point you have not argued that universities have failed to "uphold academic freedom." Your argument that there are fewer conservative instructors doesn't mean that there has been a failure to celebrate and support academic freedom. The essay seems to suggest, rather, academic freedom is only possible if progressives are "purged" from the academy.

You need to clear this up and stop "slipping" and "sliding" among different meanings/equivocations. Consistency of argument is much more persuasive to the general reader.

NO.1 VERSO...

NO2. VERSO

Repairing the damage will not be easy. A problem that was created over a half-century cannot be solved overnight, or even in a year. Restoring the social contract between higher education and American society — and updating it, as Harvard's Danielle Allen has urged — must begin with academia's recovering the trust of the American public. That means universities must first and foremost remember that they are, quite literally, public trusts. The stakeholders in universities are not just the faculty and administrators that lead them, or the students who study at them, but also the parents, donors, and alumni who support them; state and federal officials who oversee them; and ultimately the taxpayers and citizens who fund and benefit from them.

Do we need to characterize all of those concerned with higher education as "gamblers?" or business investors?

This makes more sense if we consider donors (and keepers of various endowments), but we have to ask: if a given state only provides 10% or less of funds for running a university, does this entitle 100% of governance to be determined by politically elected (or appointed) leaders in the state? Is this 10% of funding the reason why non-educators should dissolve shared governance and cut out their expertise about what counts as "education?" If "stakeholders" are not primarily teachers and students, but all these external interests (think Alasdair MacIntyre here on practices and institutions and their inevitable tensions), why have faculty at all? Why require them to learn how to research and teach for a decade or more when the curriculum can just be dictated by politicians? Taking this to the logical conclusion: why, exactly, do we need higher education at all?

#3 VERSO

Debates over the partisan balance of academic departments may sound trite and risk further politicizing academia. But they are proxies, however imperfect, for a deeper issue that cuts to the core of the social contract and the relationship

NO. 1... This is also a new claim. What departments do you refer to? You mention /Project 1619/ earlier, is this what you mean? How is a "posture of relentless criticism" of the "United States" (what do you mean though? The people? Govt policy? Vague) inconsistent with patriotism or a commitment to "the American way of life" (whatever this means)? Can we agree the relentless critique of everything from any perspective is actually a good thing for democracy and U.S. civil society? What is wrong with relentless criticism, at least at the college level? True, one must know something well to offer a fair critique. A call for a renewed focus on the former (and this, I would suggest, at the high school level) seems reasonable, precisely so relentless criticism is fair and productive (e.g., in college). Rethink this summary Will. I think you can make a more nuanced but defendable claim here.

NO.2 ... You seem to be revisiting your earlier assertion that identity-focused scholarship CAN BE "esoteric and jargon-infused"; now you are claiming that entire disciplines have "succumbed to esoterica," so I'm going to push back on this again, and more strongly. What does this mean? Should we tell NASA to stop using terms like "L-minus" or "LOX" or "liftoff" or "apostrophe?" You and I do not understand them, but the astronauts and scientists, through their specialized training, have adopted a new, specialized vocabulary. What about scholars who literally study esoterica in religious studies? Should they not study Fátima (Lúcia dos Santos) or H.P. Blavatsky (esotericist important to the early women's movement in the U.S.)?

In general, is it fair to criticize the specialized language of a special area of study meant only for scholars in that area of study? Does this critique of difficult language in higher education entail compulsory public translations? Should all higher ed research be subject to the judgment and review of non-experts? If part of the social contract is that universities should provide public scholarship on every topic, including specialized topics (and I am not convinced this is part of the social contract), accessibility does not mean doing away with specialized language, it means the ability and willingness to translate complex topics into a vernacular that's easier for more people with less education to understand.

Will, think more carefully about the implications of your critical claims here.

NO.3 Well, yes and yes. This does read like a smarter, more well-written rehearsal of arguments Bloom circa 1987. It is good that you have not piled on the youth fascination with social media technology, tik-tok, and so on. Bloom would have railed against all of that (his example, the Sony Walkman, lol—if only he could have anticipated the smartphone!)

between universities and the nation they serve: To what extent do universities represent the range of views found in broader American society? A social contract depends on some basic level of mutuality and shared identity between the two parties. If they diverge to such an extent that they barely recognize each other, let alone understand each other, the contract faces serious risk.

To what extent should they? Or should they challenge accepted views or push the accepted ones to consider unintended consequences? Should universities be a speedbump or a catalyst? Both, of course!

Yes, this is a basic definition of a contract. But you ignore the decades of scholarship on the problem (however necessary) of contractarian thinking in general: philosophically, by and large all contracts depend on the exclusion of something, usually a person. So, for example, lets take the most basic and familiar contract of marriage. The traditional vow goes, "who gives this woman to this man?" or some variation of. The contract is between two men, the groom and the father. The object is the wife, an object of barter and communication. Certainly that's not what marriage means for us now, but think about what makes the social contract here possible: the silence of a third party. Is it wrong to question contracts, however necessary they might be for keeping peace? No. This is what we call, more or less, "democracy."

Many universities have already been taking important steps (albeit often under duress, or mandates from boards or legislatures) — like eliminating diversity statements, curtailing frivolous general-education classes, and adopting new commitments to free speech and institutional neutrality — to address their shortcomings. These are needful measures. Yet even with illiberal practices ended and speech protections restored, a major question will remain: What should universities research and teach?

NO.1 VERSO

Why is this a lasting question? You have displayed such strong opinions, both your own and others, on what universities should not teach; is the argument you put forth in this article defined by negation?

Lasting reform requires positive measures in addition to negative ones. In practice, this entails reviving universities' civic mission, including through a renewed commitment to cultivating the values of citizenship and liberal learning in undergraduate education. Here, new schools of "civic thought" over the past decade represent a notable development. Governing boards and legislators in several states have recently created new academic units at institutions like Arizona State University, the University of North Carolina, Ohio State University, the University of Tennessee, the University of Florida, and the University of Texas at Austin. The particular structure and academic

NO.2 VERSO..

Right, but also be clear about who is bankrolling such institutes. Here in Texas, it's billionaires and ideologues who are ultimately about establishing an undemocratic theocracy (e.g., Tim Dunn, your friend at the AEI, Harlan Crow, Bill Holmes, Bob Rowling, etc.). You should be personally aware that funding for UF's Hamilton Center was also from a number of private, self-identified "conservative" donors, and should acknowledge this to position yourself as engaging in good faith. You probably know that the SCL started as the "Civitas Institute," very much modeled on think-tank imaginings (Claremont, Manhattan) of how to conservatize public higher ed. There's a reason Chris Rufo went to study Orbán in Hungary to figure out a blueprint for refashioning higher education as a biased, politically conservative machine in the guise of apolitical civic engagement. "Civic education" has always been a part of the public university, it's written into the first Land Grand Act. What's "different" here, and you should spell this out more clearly, is that "civic education" now means "conservative values." Just be clear for your readers.

NO.1... This sentence is so abstract it floats! What are these? General education usually includes the teaching of the basic skills necessary to finish college (e.g., writing, speaking, arguing, self-care [being on your own for the first time], and so on). What classes are "frivolous," or lack any serious purpose or value? Be concrete. This is vague, so readers will rely on whatever they suspect is frivolous and valueless. Many young people find geometry and calculous frivolous and pointless . . . so should we stop teaching geometry and calculus? Explain to readers, concretely.

NO.2.... Is it possible however, this civic mission has not changed, only the way "civic" is contested as a term today? The values of citizenship are fundamentally rooted in this country in democracy, including a commitment to equality before the law, the rule of law, free speech and assembly, and so on. In what sense is a call for a revival actually an attack on civic values? What about those instructors who teach civics and political engagement already? Those of us who have dedicated our lives to teaching and researching civic engagement? Do we not exist? You are in danger of letting authoritarian talking points overshadow reality here...

focus of each program differs, but all include a mandate to reintroduce civic education to the undergraduate curriculum.

The virtues of this approach are many. Some of its most thoughtful proponents — including Paul Carrese, Benjamin and Jenna Storey, James Stoner, and Hans Zeiger — have written compelling articles in these pages and elsewhere articulating the case for placing civic thought at the center of higher-education reform, and even for it to become a new field of academic inquiry in its own right. Following their advice will entail reviving the study of classical Greek and Roman political thought, the European Enlightenment, and the American founding, thereby restoring a desiccated part of the American university's mission: forming students into citizens.

Anticipate how skeptical readers will regard this sentence; don't open yourself up to questions of whether you're covertly espousing indoctrination in the other direction! I am reminded of your earlier discussion of the Chinese Communist Party's "zealous promotion and funding of... scientific collaborations and research sponsored by Chinese corporations." Take care to explain how this differs from business interference in higher education, or, to take a more extreme route, Maoism and/or Uyghur "re-education" camps in China.

This is excellent and a worthy endeavor. Clarify, though, if this is zero-sum (i.e. if Greco-Roman thought, the European Enlightenment, and the American founding constitute the sum total of knowledge necessary for citizenship): does this mean, for example, we should not study the Middle Passage or the African Diaspora? Be specific on what this means. Also, toward this end you should consider stating one of your priorities is to provide more funding and protection for the UT Department of Classics, who is the resident authority on these important topics.

These projects are off to a promising start. The schools have hired impressive faculty who combine excellence in scholarship with devotion to teaching, and have been greeted with robust student interest. Notably, most of these new schools are located within institutions that are members of the Association of American Universities. In the prestige- and hierarchy-obsessed world of academia, such universities possess a disproportionate degree of power and influence: Their Ph.D. programs supply the majority of new faculty to other colleges and universities, their scholars conduct most of the peer-review screenings for publication in prestigious outlets, their tenured professors write the preponderance of the external referee

Do you mean to reference John Yoo here, the first invited fellow of UT's School for Civic Leadership and advocate for torture and Unitary Executive Theory? You name a lot of names above, should do so here for parallelism.

Interesting. This seems like a non-sequitur. The AAU is related to these emerging civic programs how? This paragraph is incomplete. It seems like an side-dig at the AAU for being elitist, but it's unclear how this relates to your argument. If a number of the programs you laud are at AAU institutions, why is this "wrong" as you imply? Unclear.

letters that determine promotions for junior faculty at other universities, and their graduates attain a high percentage of leadership positions in business and government.

No evidence. Can you provide the name of one "university leader" at UT-Austin who was an activist grad student? If anything, UT seems to be led by administrators who would never be described as activists at any point in their career. Yet you hinge a great deal of your argument on this point that the modern university has been inundated with little Trotskys and Lenins who are fraudulent scholars who have evacuated words like "racism" of any meaning, to use your earlier reference to Peter Flawn.

And yet, promising though it is, the focus on civic thought has limits. The first is that, as a notional academic field, "civic thought" is rather narrow, and largely appeals to political theorists and related scholars of the American founding, with the occasional stray classicist or legal scholar. It is hard to see how a military historian of the Napoleonic Wars, or a scholar of Elizabethan literature, or a philosopher of medieval epistemology, or an international trade economist, could meaningfully contribute to research or teaching on American civic thought. Some champions of civic thought argue that all of those subjects relate to civic thought by virtue of the fact that they study the human experience. But if everything is civic thought, then nothing is.

The argument is no longer coherent at this point. So, what is the point here about "civic thought?" That is should be narrowly defined? I'm confused. Clarify the point here, as well as how it relates to the essay as a whole.

The second shortcoming follows from the first: "Civic thought" *per se* will have limited appeal to undergraduate students as a viable major, primarily because it lacks professional opportunities. Most students today seek both meaningful learning and professional development in their studies, and in considering a major, they (or their parents) are mindful of how well it will equip them to secure employment after graduation. For these reasons, the new Civics Honors major we are unveiling this fall at the University of Texas is a rigorous humanities and social-

So is your argument now that "civic thought" should be a major? If so, how is this different than a degree in Government (what we call Political Science at UT at Austin).

Is "professional opportunity" the only measure of a valuable degree? This seems in tension with the overall argument that we need to reinvest (a false premise, I think) in civic education for its own sake. Are we only to study civic issues insofar as it provides a "professional opportunity?" Please clarify.

Consider removing this parenthetical; you may have students as readers and this may seem paternalistic. Note higher educators are required to teach students / as adults/ (one of the reasons for FEMA protections). Parents may help students with tuition, but they are not supposed to make decisions for the student—which would be contrary to the point of higher education (self-reliance, etc.).

no.1 .... Query: is employment the only reason for higher education? Curious what you think. It did not seem to me this was a foundational assumption of the essay's argument, but now it appears to be one. Is this just a "bonus?" Or are you suggesting that employment is a prerequisite of citizenship? Surely you are not. Remember the difference between democracy and autocracy is the role of the state: in a democracy, the state regulates business; in an autocracy, the state protects and promotes business with deregulation. I would think you mean to buoy your argument here with democracy as the endgame of education.

science curriculum that includes quantitative training, foreign-language proficiency, writing skills, literature courses, and foundational classes in Western civilization.

So basically what you pursued at the Hamilton Center, correct?

Third, as University of Texas faculty member Scott Carrell has pointed out, civic thought as a notional field of study lacks the defined research methods of an academic discipline. It would struggle to build a coherent doctoral program to train graduate students to form the next generation of scholars.

Hmm. Are you saying that your university is pursing a new academic field called "Civic Thought?" So the endgame with this new college is a Ph.D. program? Is this geared toward public service (which is currently covered thoroughly and productively by the LBJ School of Public Policy) or, as you seem to suggest, think-tank partisan scholarship? Be clear.

Fourth, while civic thought may be able to carve out a small piece of intellectual ground on the broad academic landscape, in its separatism it risks surrendering the chance to influence the troubled humanities and social-science disciplines that have contributed to the broader loss of trust in higher education. Put another way, the answer is not, as some of civic thought's proponents have suggested, to promote the new field as a conservative version of feminist and gender studies.

Umm, word you want?

The answer to what question? Unclear.

Are these troubled? Have you provided the evidence here to support the idea the humanities are troubled? Or, as with the counter-subversive tradition, is the assertion that it is inherently troubled the source of the trouble? Careful here; you have not established "social-science" is troubled at all; you've only referred to the liberal arts so far (and remember, the liberal arts overlaps but the social-sciences institutionally, but these are very different in method and approach; don't lump them together).

This is interesting. Who is arguing this? Can you cite some sources? I'd personally like to read more about these claims as well.

The University of Florida and the University of Texas at Austin are addressing these criticisms through a theory of reform that begins with reviving liberal education. There are endless debates over what that term means that I will not litigate here. However, I am fond of John Agresto's pithy summary that "the liberal arts are those studies *that help make men and women free*." In his wise book on the same subject, he added that this means "the seeking of knowledge about important matters through reason and

no1. verso...

Unclear referent; do you mean "liberal education," or "theory of reform?" Careful to be clear, especially when you're saying it's not worth clarifying! Don't seem dismissive of factors when your argument is that we are in a crisis, you undercut yourself.

I would clarify which book of Agresto's here; is it The Humanist as Citizen? Tomatoes, Basil, and Olive Oil: An Italian American Cookbook?

no.1 ... What does this "reform" entail? So far, you have suggested the addition or "return" to the study of civic thought. Despite the fact many if not most in liberal arts would say this study never left, what you have proposed thus far are more programs like The Civitas Institute and the Hamilton Center (and the School of Civic Leadership). These suggestions are additions. You've only hinted at subtractions, but concretely, what would those subtractions be? The hinted suggestion is getting rid of "valueless" courses of study, like cultural studies and critical theory. But is that what you mean to subtract? Be clear and concrete. When you make policy arguments in vague terms, these become elastic and subject to a wide swath of interpretation.

reflection." This includes civic thought, of course, but it also encompasses research and teaching on Western civilization more broadly, and how the West has interacted with other civilizations and cultures, such as Asia and the Islamic world. This, too, derives from the Western tradition. As Allan Bloom once wrote, "[t]he scientific study of other cultures is almost exclusively a Western phenomenon."

Seems rather worth examining the history of Western scientific study of other cultures... personally, I think of phrenology, race science, and paternalistic, oversimplified early anthropology and religious studies á la "The Golden Bough" as the legacy of Western study of other cultures. In this context, the 'identity studies' that you earlier railed against are a corrective measure that allow non-white, non-European populations to enrich, contribute to, or altogether correct dominant narratives of their own history and culture.

In practical terms, this means pursuing multiple avenues of reforming and reviving the humanities and social sciences, both within the new schools and in the more established colleges of liberal arts. Both Florida and Texas, for example, are launching new multi-disciplinary undergraduate degrees on themes such as War, Statecraft, and Strategy; Great Books and Ideas; and Philosophy, Politics, Economics, and Law. These new degrees are designed to be expansive, meaning they include specializations outside the traditional conceptual and geographic boundaries of the West. For example, because the War, Statecraft, and Strategy major will equip students to understand the most acute national-security challenges of the present era, it will offer courses on topics such as China, Russia, and Islamic history and culture.

Explain. "Reviving" implies a slumber. Is that slumber the presumed lack of civic thought education?

Yes, but let us also consider what else Florida and Texas share in common. Are all those commonalities of a piece, and if so, how? Can it be think tank coordination? What do you mean here, exactly?

Not sure it's worth including the point that both Florida and Texas are conservative here if the aim is for the critiques we level to be more successfully apolitical than the article itself

Are these "new" or simply reimagined? I gather the latter. I note the argument that led to the creation of land grant, public universities was Morill's argument that these schools should teach "military science" in addition to agriculture (hence, the "A&Ms" came first). These topics/courses have always been taught. Is your argument that these topics have heretofore been taught the wrong way?

So the focus of the major you propose is war? Is this not already taught? Also, you say this major will prepare students to understand national security challenges of the CURRENT era; China, Russia, and 'the Islamic world' are currently considered the most pertinent national security threats to America, but will these majors examine past international conflicts, including past contentious relationships with France, England, Germany?

You have negatively highlighted the attrition of military history as a discipline several times throughout this piece...

These new curricula are designed to impart knowledge, skills, and values. This means promoting a body of knowledge derived from, in Matthew Arnold's renowned formulation, "the best that has been thought and said"; training students in professional skills such as reading, writing, and speaking for persuasion, as well as qualitative

Yes, but, many have observed (himself included) that "sweetness and light" is defined by the ruling class. So Shakespeare trumps Beyoncé, yes? This is a reassertion of the high/low culture distinction. Is it not important to study how popular culture is civic engagement too?

no.1.... So the model of teaching here is "transmission" and not "active learning," have I got that right? The assumption here is that the teacher "gives" or "imparts" or "gifts" students with knowledge, like a product or service? Be clear here about your vision of pedagogy and what it means to learn. Here you suggest a kind of passive assumption of knowledge by students. Of course, countless studies on education have shown learning is not osmosis.

and quantitative analysis; and cultivating the values necessary for service, leadership, and self-government in our pluralistic society and constitutional republic.

To teach in these new programs and to revive critical areas of research expertise, universities such as Florida and Texas have been recruiting new faculty in otherwise neglected areas such as diplomatic, military, and intellectual history; political theory; Renaissance and early modern Europe; theology and virtue ethics; the American founding; and Shakespeare and Milton. Fortunately at the University of Texas, our history, philosophy, and government departments already feature clusters of faculty strength in some of these fields. We plan to continue expanding these in the coming years.

Yes, but in English, the traditional housing department? Or is this in another college like the SCL? Is not theology taught in the Religion Department? Or is it now relocated to the SCL? Is the American founding not taught in the departments of History or American Studies? Or is it better taught in SCL? What if scholars and teachers of these subjects do not want to affiliate with a partisan college? Do their courses not count? Clarity would be useful here.

"virtue ethics"... scholarly inquiry or imparted knowledge on this point? Are we teaching students how to think or what to think?

You have, I assume inadvertently, left out area studies and policy studies departments and schools from this list.

A revival of the liberal arts, with these new schools at the vanguard, must include resetting the broader academic job market by sending demand signals for more faculty specializing in these areas. This begins with renewing training for doctoral students and will extend to creating new faculty positions. At some point, and may it be soon, other universities will rediscover the intellectual importance and student interest in these critical fields and revive the academic market for hiring faculty and offering courses in these areas.

Is this possible if there is no job market left? The argument assumes that there will be a higher education left/possible after all of these federal and state "reforms."

Unsurprisingly, this approach attracts skeptics and opponents. For example, a recent federal lawsuit filed by a coalition of Florida professors with backing from the

American Civil Liberties Union accuses the Hamilton School's classes titled "What is the Common Good?" and "God and Science" of somehow illicitly promoting "conservative viewpoints." The plaintiffs also claim that scholarly lectures the Hamilton School hosted on "The Origins of Liberalism and the Modern Political Imagination" and "Philosophy of Religion in an Age of Growing Non-religion" constitute illegal "political or social activism." Silly though they are, these charges reveal how some progressive activists seem to misconstrue any recovery of the traditional liberal arts as a menacing form of conservative intrusion.

Reconsider: Are educators' concerns about, say, the elimination of the study of the history of Texas or of Mexico, or the study of indigenous religious beliefs, in tension with "traditional liberal arts" (it's still not clear what is meant by this, other than white, Anglo cultures)? Why are these reforms presented as a zero-sum game, such that coursework topics are getting duplicated by a new college that have been taught for over a century in departments of titular equivalence?

There remains the serious question of what role, if any, political considerations should play in these new academic units. The answer involves standing upstream from politics, eschewing partisanship, and instead heralding the pre-political academic ideals of discovering knowledge, seeking truth, and cultivating citizenship. Put another way, they should offer an alternative to the politicization of too many liberal-arts departments, law schools, policy schools, and education schools that does not consist of counter-politicization from the other side. Non-partisanship does not mean indifference to viewpoint, however, and here the new schools do offer a broader range of ideas and perspectives than are found in most other academic units. This includes conservative views.

no.1 verso...

Good point. Elaborate on how this is not what's happening in Texas, particularly in respect to your appointment as provost. You've offered a lot of self-evidence in this manifesto in terms of anecdotes. So argue similarly here for parallelism: What stories do you have to tell about push back on the administration for wanting, for example, to sign away university autonomy with the "higher education" compact the Trump administration has offered. Is the willful suspension of courses about race, gender, and LGBTQ+ issues consistent with non-politicization? Explain to readers how and why you what you are saying is different than what Texas citizens have been hearing for the last three years. This will make your manifesto much stronger and more persuasive.

I think most readers will universally agree with this statement. I think the question you should consider is how much influence outside "dark money" and conservative donors have on these "reforms." It's difficult to maintain an "upstream" stance when higher education reforms are framed as an attack on "Looney, Marxist UT Professors," when those behind such civic thought initiatives frame them as a deliberate attack on the extant professoriate?

On April 16th of this year, Lt. Gov. of Texas Dan Patrick celebrated on social media the passage of SB-37 this way:

> "Tonight, with final passage of Senate Bill 37, the faculty senate at the University of Texas at Austin had their power stripped and found out the Legislature does have authority over faculty senates after all!
>
> Here's an idea for them to consider: these looney Marxist UT professors should find a friendly blue state to move to so we can fill their roles with quality conservative professors who will teach critical thinking. Yippie Ki Yay! Adios! Sayonara! Auf Wiedersehen! Au Revoir! In every language you can possibly think . . . "

The latter is a nod to a /Die Hard/ monologue in which the hero says something obscene before "blowing up" the building (here the analogy is blowing up higher ed). What are faculty to think when the legislature takes over the university and tells anyone center center or left of center to personally "move" (read, "self-deport") to a "blue state" so that the university can be restocked with conservative ideologues?

Will, come on. Just be honest about whom you are aiding and abetting here, and it's not the university.

It's too soon to render any definitive verdict, but early indications of a potential liberal-arts revival are promising. Student interest in these curricula continues to grow. By the fall 2025 semester, over 3,000 University of Florida undergraduates will have enrolled in Hamilton School classes since it launched courses two years ago. Similarly, the School of Civic Leadership here at the University of Texas received an overwhelming number of applications for its inaugural class of undergraduate majors enrolling this fall. Other universities offering a rigorous humanities curriculum also enjoy robust student demand. Before the University of Tulsa ill-advisedly shuttered its Honors College in Western Civilization, a quarter of its freshmen enrolled in the program over the last two years.

Right, this is positive. But is it in contrast with your claim, student interest in liberal arts is in precipitous decline and "narrowing"? You seem to be saying the opposite here. Explain or qualify.

Ironically, the dawn of the artificial-intelligence era may also offer an opportunity for renewing the liberal arts. As AI tools become increasingly adept at collecting, processing, and communicating staggeringly vast amounts of information, the human skills of critical thinking, analysis, and speaking and writing thoughtfully will atrophy to the point of extinction without a concerted effort to preserve those skills in the next generation of students. Education in the humanities and social sciences, besides enriching our lives with a body of knowledge and stimulating inquiry, also offers the best means of cultivating those analytical and communication skills that humans will still need to flourish in the AI era.

This is an important part of your agenda; consider highlighting or putting in boldface, or typesetting as a "isolated quote" for visual dynamism. Everyone agrees critical thinking, speaking, and writing is key as these new technologies threaten to take over these essential human forms of labor and expression.

Almost a century ago, University of Texas at Austin president Harry Yandell Benedict observed that "public confidence is the only real endowment of a state university." This is true of private universities as well. The social contract between America and her universities, which depends on public confidence, was not fully appreciated or understood until its rupture became painfully visible over the past few years. While the Trump administration's punitive measures against elite universities may dominate recent headlines, this crisis of public trust predates the election of Donald Trump. Both sides will need to do their part to repair and revive the social contract. Universities can take the first steps by renewing their commitments to the American people, our constitutional order, Western civilization, and the classical liberal arts.

Is this rupture self-induced, however, or a product of outside political pressure in the context of a pandemic (when teachers resisted in-person teaching because, at the time, many thought they were risking their lives to do so)? How is this rupture a product of think-tanks, figures like Christopher Rufo who, admitted, whipped up "CRT" as a devil term on purpose, knowing full well CRT is not taught in secondary education? How much is this rupture a forced, cultural crisis instead of an economic one reinterpreted as a cultural one?

Interesing term that goes undefined throughout. What are "classical liberal arts?" On this score, what are "liberal arts" and what is "classical"? Some definitional work needs to be done to avoid readerly assumptions that "classical" means "white."

William Inboden is executive vice president and provost at the University of Texas at Austin. He was formerly director of the Alexander Hamilton School for Classical and Civic Education at the University of Florida.

Finally, Will, I'll say that your essay is very similar to Shannon Watkins' 2024 Manhattan Institute report, "Protecting the Liberal Arts and Humanities in American Higher Education," which should be cited here. As a reminder, according to UT policy, you commit plagiarism "if you purposefully borrow the ideas, examples, or structure of your source without acknowledging it."